19th Drama Festival

By BERT BINNY

SCHOOLS TO COMPETE FOR COLONIST PRIZES

TOMORROW IS OPENING DAY of the 19th consecutive Greater Victoria Schools Drama Festival.

Ordinarily, the number "19" has little special significance but it gathers quite some lustre in respect to the 19th festival. This regular and unbroken continuity is, likely enough, something of a record. Probably, in its course, the schools will have presented between 300 and 400 plays with, literally, thousands of players involved.

I always thoroughly enjoy a minimum of 90 per cent of the plays, having seen 142 in Victoria and another 50 elsewhere in the past five years. But they are of prime benefit to the performers, mostly because they expose them to experience. The players find out whether they like acting, whether they are any good at it and, sometimes, why. Participation in the drama festival is not designed to recruit or to evolve future Bernhardts or Irvings. But it does give scores of students a practical insight into matters theatrical and provide them with a sound basis upon which to decide whether they like it and, if so, in what capacity.

At this distance the 1959 program looks exceptionally good, particularly with regard to the plays. This is very important because the play is the instrument with which the players create their various impressions and to chivvy them onto the stage with a poor play is like sending out a woodsman with a blunt axe.

Among these excellent plays are such as "The Barretts of Wimpole Street," "The Birthday of the Infanta," "The Fish," "The Ass and the Philosophers," "The Ugly Duckling" and offerings from such reliable producers as Phillip Johnson, Dan Protheroe, T. B. Morris and even Will Shakespeare.

There are 29 plays in all compared with 24 last year, 29 in 1957, 28 in 1956 and 30 in 1955 and 1954. Of this year's, five are from elementary schools, 11 from junior high and 13 from senior high.

The casts employed vary greatly in number. Jacqueline Thurston and Jeannie Belcher comprise the entire company in Sc: 1, Act III, of "Hamlet" with Jeannie as "Ophelia" and Jacqueline as "Hamlet" ("To be or not to be . . ."). This, together with Marjorie Fleming's "After the Church Supper" with Rosemary Kilgore in the lead part of "Mrs. Howard," is entered from St. Margaret's School.

At the other end of the numerical scale, Oak Bay Junior High School's fantasy, "Paddly Pools," employs 19. There are a dozen or more in Glenlyon's "The Moving Finger," 15 in James Bay Elementary's "The Teddy Bear Cave," 18 or 19 in "The Mystery of the Ming Tree," presented by S. J. Willis Junior High, 22 in both "Royal Suspect" from Esquimalt Senior High and "The Hole in the Sock" from Brentwood Elementary and a grand aggregation of 23 in Colquitz Junior High's "The Emperor's Nightingale."

Also of particular interest are two plays, "The Farce of the Devil's Bridge" and "A Romantic Conspiracy." Both are from Mount Newton Junior-Senior High School, both are comedies and, most notable feature of all, both are directed by Grade XI students.

Beth Haugen has a cost of 12 in "A Romantic Conspiracy," all from junior high. There are 11 girls and one boy, Ulrich Liedtke, who plays "Dr. Harper." On the stage anyway, the medical profession has much to recommend it, the doctor apparently having the entree into otherwise exclusively female convocations. Included in "A Romantic Conspiracy" are Nancy Tidman as "Darlene"—a character described by the director

Rival directors from Mount Newton are Beth Haugen, left, and Janet Milligan.

as a "glamorpuss"—Wendy Brown as "Lois," and either Pam Woods or Margaret Taylor as "Sue."

Beth's directing rival is Janet Milligan who has had considerable acting experience in these festivals. Janet directs "The Farce of the Devil's Bridge," a story set in France and derived from a French legend. There are one female and five male parts, the latter including a Chinese-type Property Man, played by Peter Gardener. Janet's brother, Joe, is "Father Kado" and Michael Woods is the "Peddler," actually a far more sinister character in disguise.

MOUNT NEWTON'S third entry, directed by Mrs. M. Phillips, is "Smoke in the Valley," a comedy set in the England of 1854. Experienced and frequently successful Tisha Richard is "Elaine" while "Sophie" is played by Beth Haugen, a very busy girl.

The five elementary plays are all of the carefree, fanciful type. A. A. Milne's entirely charming, "The Ugly Duckling," is the choice at Gordon Head, with Angela St. Hillaire as "Camilla," Howard Singleton as "Simon" and Donna Painter as "Dulcibella." The director is David Allan.

From Oaklands School comes the well-known story of "Beauty and the Beast," with Wendy

Victoria High's "Stew for Simon" has Bill Hubbard in the name role.

Glover as "Beauty" and David Maltby as the "Beast." A. A. Burton directs a cast of four girls and three boys.

Miss Mary Miller is producing "The Teddy Bear Cave" at James Bay with a cast of 15, all from Grade III. Daryl Wakelyn is "Bob" and Noreen Taylor is "Judy." This is very likely the youngest entry in the festival.

There are 22 in Brentwood's "The Hole in the Sock," directed by Graham Rice. The "King" is Vernon Benn and the "Chamberlain" is Roy Mezger, supported by eight princesses, three lords, and three ladies-in-waiting, four pages and two attendants.

Glanford Elementary, under F. Jarvis, offers "The Day Is Bright" with Bill Goff as "Murillo," Brian Rowbottom as "Sebastian" and Marnie Treloar as the "Duchess." This is yet another in the lengthy list of delightful plays.

AT THE JUNIOR HIGH LEVEL, Lansdowne offers Rachel Field's fantasy, "Three Pills in a Bottle," with Michael Martin as "Tony," a total cast of eight and Gordon Mason directing.

Colquitz presents Dan Protheroe's adaptation of "The Emperor's Nightingale," by Hans Anderson. This made a captivating production on "Shirley Temple's Storybook" not so long ago. At Colquitz the "Emperor" is Ricky Critchley; Ervyn Duke is the "Lord-in-Waiting" and the little Kitchen Maid is Margaret Morgan. Director is Mrs. Blossom Johnston and there are 23 players.

From Royal Oak comes "The Farce of the Worthy Master, Pierre Patelin," directed by Mrs. Pat Clarke and employing a cast of five and extras. This is another early French contribution. The single female part is, at the time of writing, being contested by Joan Youell and Valerie Blair.

Josephine Niggli's highly amusing "Sunday Costs Five Pesos" is in course of rehearsal at Central. Wayne Morson is "Fidel" and the four girls involved are Robin Regan, Sandra Moorhouse, Violet Cresner and Robina MacFarlane. Also at Central an all-girl cast is playing "The Romance of the Willow Pattern" with Pat Litster, Pat Conrad, Stephanie Sturdy, Fran Woods, Nicola Soutar and an "orchestra" from Grade VII. Both these plays are directed by Byron Barker.

Also in the Chinese style is "The Mystery of the Ming Tree," produced at S. J. Willis by Miss Christine McNab. There is a cast of 18 or 19 with Ronnie Hatch as the "Sorcerer" and Penny Espley as "Golden Bells."

Glenlyon School offers "The Moving Finger" by Percival Wilde. The cast, under John Sheather, numbers about 12 with Douglas Fraser as the "King." Jamie Craig as the girl, "Vuka," and Charles Stanbury as "Dikkan."

Peter Underwood directs the rather difficult fantasy, "Paddly Pools," at Oak Bay Junior High. There is a cast of 19 with Mike Harrison, Murray Farmer, Peter Langille, Sandra Bastin and Heather McPherson in prominent parts.

"The Birthday of the Infanta," an adaptation of one of Oscar Wilde's most attractive stories, is to be presented by the Belmont Junior Drama Club. The director is James Dulmage. Margaret Raymond plays the "Infanta." "Fantastic" (the Dwarf in the original) is Gay Young and Lynn Weir is the "Camerera." This play, with a youthful cast, was recently on the CBC-TV Dominion network as produced by Valentine Boss.

Mount View, St. Margaret's, Oak Bay and Esquimalt each has two festival entries in the senior class.

OAK BAY HIGH has one of the few dramas, "A Cup of Tea." This is an adaptation by Anna Fergol of a story by Katherine Mansfield and uses four female and two male parts. In contradistinction is Yves Cabrol's gossamer-light, "The Fish," with Dave Laundy as "Yves Cabrol," Robert Foster as "Pierre Plum" and Valerie Byers and Nora Wright as their daughters. Miss K. Youdall directs both plays.

From Mount View come "In Waltz Time," directed by Mrs. Muriel Fraser and with an all-

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